

Rebecca Sallowin

THE

1508/1317

Nature of True Greatness:

A SERMON;

PREACHED AT MANCHESTER,

MARCH 15, 1792,

BEFORE THE MEMBERS

OF THE

NEW CHURCH;

(Understood by the New JERUSALEM in the Revelation)

AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR UNANIMOUS

REQUEST.

BY J. PROUD, N. H. M.

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P R E F A C E.

THE grand object of the following Discourse, delivered on the 15th instant, before a numerous Congregation, in Manchester, consisting as well of Members of the New Church, as of many respectable persons of different denominations,* is to inculcate *universal Charity*, and

* It may be proper here to observe, as a tribute of gratitude due to the Rev. Mr. *Hawkes*, and the *Unatavian Society* meeting in *Mosley-street, Manchester*, that the following Sermon was delivered in their Chapel, they having given their free consent for the Author to preach there that evening.

And after service, the Rev. Mr. *Hawkes*, and some other Gentlemen belonging to the Society, very politely and liberally offered the use of their Pulpit and Chapel to the Author, and his friends, whenever he should visit Manchester again. Such an instance of liberality, candour and politeness, deserves to be noticed, and demands our sincere acknowledgments. And the Author thinks himself exceedingly happy, that his discourse goes into the world accompanied with such an example of *charity, candour, and kindness*.

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and do away that narrow mode of thinking, that contracted sectarian spirit, which has separated one Christian from another, filled the Church with enmity and hatred, introduced confusion and disorder, and banished Peace from the earth. -

The time, we hope, is approaching, in which Christians will be united in *Faith*, in *Affection*, and in *Life*. We are convinced that the happy day, which the Prophets foretold, and Christians have long expected, is now begun to dawn. As that day advances, Truth will diffuse its cheering light, and Charity extend her divine influence.

Happy in beholding the bright, the increasing beams of this celestial morning, we feel constrained, by the cords of fraternal love, to call upon our neighbours, our fellow christians, to awake, to arise from the slumbers of a long dark night, that they may enjoy the refreshing sweets of the rising day, and walk in the heat and light of heaven itself.

We are assured that LOVE TO GOD, and CHARITY TO MAN, are essential to true religion. Without such love we cannot be Christians.

And where this love truly exists, there *Bigotry* and *Party spirit* can have no place. These infernal demons, these firebrands of contention, strife and confusion, we wish to see driven to their native home, the regions of discord, anarchy, and woe.

Should

Should the following discourse have the least tendency to promote pure Love to God, disinterested Charity to Man, an ardent esteem for Piety and Religion, and a zealous desire of being *useful*, of becoming the servants of all that good may be done: should it, in these respects, tend in any degree to unite one christian to another, to remove those sectarian prejudices which abound, and to increase that mutual affection, which can alone make christians happy with each other; the Author will think himself well repaid, sincerely rejoice in that good, and unite with his brethren in giving all the praise to the LORD alone.

With a sincere desire, that Goodness and Truth, Love and Charity, Faith and Obedience, may increase more than ever; that JESUS CHRIST may be known, worshipped and loved as the ONLY TRUE GOD; and that his kingdom may come, his will be done on earth, as in heaven, by all mankind; I remain, in real charity with all men,

THE AUTHOR.



THE ALPHABET

MATT. xliii. 11.

HE THAT IS GREATEST AMONG YOU, SHALL
BE YOUR SERVANT.



TRUE religion is in itself so very opposite to the depraved nature of the human mind, that when a person under the influence of that depravity, begins to enquire what religion is, he is apt to conceive an aversion to it.

Finding that Christianity enjoins self-abasement, humility and meekness, virtues diametrically opposite to the aspiring, lofty, and self-exalting mind of man, he feels a repugnance to its laws and precepts; and, having had no taste of its enjoyments, he cannot think of relinquishing a life of folly and vice for a life of religion and virtue, in which he sees no charms.

These unfavourable impressions are still increased, when he beholds the forbidding garbs of sadness, melancholy and mourning, assumed by some who lay claim to the christian character.

Thus,

Thus, in the days of our Lord the Pharisees, to be *thought* religious, could disfigure their faces, wear a sad countenance, and appear as skeletons with pretended fastings. And, at this day, gloomy aspects, dejected countenances, declined heads and unsocial manners, are with some, essential marks of religion.

But such appearances are no less foreign to the true Christian character, than pernicious in their effects upon the inexperienced. Many are thereby led to conclude, that a religious life must of all others be the most disagreeable and unlovely, here at least, whatever it may be hereafter.

That a religious man may, at particular times, be sad, depressed, and dejected, I allow. There are a variety of circumstances in this life, which may occasion such a state of mind. The natural constitution, or disposition, may lead to it. And there are states of conflict, combat, and temptation which may cause it. But Religion itself, the love of God and our Neighbour, with an obedience to divine laws, can never lead to any thing of this kind: but to the very contrary; to every thing that is cheerful, pleasing, agreeable and lovely.

I would not, however, by any means be understood as encouraging levity, folly, or vain sensual mirth: or any cheerfulness that originates in, or borders upon what is evil. No; every thing of this kind is as opposite to religion, as vice is to virtue. All I mean is, that those who possess true christianity,



tianity, real religion, should ever exhibit it as it is; represent it in its own native charms, as the most *desireable, cheerful, and happy* life man can possibly live. Then would the young and inexperienced not be disgusted with its unnatural aspect, but charmed with its true appearance, enamored by its heavenly form, and almost irresistibly impelled to make it their own, and be happy.

The words of our text may, perhaps, to some persons seem to imply something disagreeable, because it is said, *He that is greatest shall be your Servant*. Yet when they are explained and understood, they will, I trust, exhibit nothing unpleasing; but the very reverse.—In truth, my christian friends, I am so far from vainly attempting to terrify and affright men into religion and goodness, by the threatenings of *vengeance, condemnation, wrath and hell*, that I much rather wish to charm them into such a life by rationally and scripturally convincing them of its superlative excellence, pleasure and happiness.—But to proceed to the text.

Let us consider,

1st. What is meant by being the *greatest*, and *who* are so.

2^d. In what sense such shall be servants, and *what* their service.

To illustrate the former part of our subject, it may be expedient to turn our thoughts to the Lord himself for a few moments.

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It will, I trust, be acknowledged by every one present, that the LORD, our God and Saviour, is the GREATEST of all. And it is equally true, that he became the SERVANT of all: He took upon him the form of a Servant. He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He became poor, that we might be made rich. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. He washed the feet of his disciples, and left us an example that we should do as he hath done.

But why do we say the LORD Jesus is *greatest* of all?—Not merely in consideration of his eternal DIVINITY and GODHEAD; because in *this sense* there is no comparison to be made between himself, and his creatures: we mean in his *character, works, and example* AMONG MEN. He was then the greatest, because the most holy, the most wise, the most perfect. He was all love, mercy, and kindness. He went about doing good; and he set us a perfect example of every grace and virtue, which it is possible for man to possess.

Consequently, then, the greatest in the church and kingdom of the LORD, is that person who comes the nearest to this divine pattern, who is the most like Jesus Christ: or, in other words, who is the most wise, holy, and useful.

And as the blessed Redeemer was the *least* also; so will the man who is most like his LORD, be the least among his brethren, by being meek, humble, lowly-

lowly-minded, self-abased : by no means puffed up with pride, arrogance, and self-conceit. For the greater any one is as to wisdom, love, goodness, and the like, the more and better acquainted will he be with his own *propriety*, his *nothingness*; and that, of himself, he is nothing but mere evil. Therefore he will ever be humble and little in his own eyes.

By the *greatest* therefore we plainly understand, the *best*, the most like JESUS CHRIST, the *most perfect character*. To be in *high office*, in *dignified employment* in the church, is not to be the *greatest*, though some may imagine this: for all the dignity and honor annexed thereunto, belong to the LORD, and not to the man. And to the LORD will they be given by all those who fill such offices, if they are truly great and good men.

True greatness, therefore, is in every ones power; as it consists in *pure religion*, in *real goodness of heart and life*. And this every man, through divine aid, may attain.

We proceed, 2dly. to consider in what sense such shall be servants, and what their service.

By being servants no more is meant here, than serving the church of the LORD, by being *truly useful* thereto. But although this is called a *service* from the *use* that is derived from it, yet it is not so in any burdensome or disagreeable light to the person employed in it.

All that the good man does for the benefit of others, arises from a principle of charity in his own

breast. While he is rendering essential service to others, he is at the same time gratifying his own inclination, and acting from his *life's love*.

If he be concerned to minister in holy things, to preach the word, attend the work of the sanctuary, and employ the gifts he has received: he does all this not as a *task*, a *servitude*; but as a work which is dear to his soul, in which he truly delights, and without the doing of which he could by no means be happy.

It is just the same, if he is engaged in any lower employment, whatever that employment may be. If in doing it he renders service to the *church*, to *mankind*, he is truly happy in so doing.

A true principle of charity is ever accompanied with *humility*; humility will prompt to the meanest office for the good of another, and in such humility is *honor*.—Never did virtue appear more godlike and divine, than when Jesus was girt with a towel, and stooped down to wash the feet of his disciples.

But to illustrate this subject in a more familiar manner.

In a *well-governed nation* every office, character, and employment, from the chief magistrate to the meanest officer, is for the benefit of the whole: and as the whole body is made more happy, so is every individual thereof.

Thus it is in the church and kingdom of the **Lord**. Every one who renders service to the whole, and adds to the general good, does in proportion partake

partake of that good, and is the more happy, the more useful he is to others.

As to the *particular* services good men may render to the church, they are so multifarious and numerous that we cannot pretend to recite them here. But this we may observe, that where true charity prevails, there wisdom will direct what service to perform.

And here I can but take the liberty of calling upon my fellow christians, to consider how incumbent it is for you all to be of service each to other. The LORD's kingdom is a kingdom of uses. Every member of it must take his part for general good. And whatever power, ability, or opportunity you have to *do good, to be useful, that you are bound, as men of love and charity, to improve.*

If he who is greatest among you is to be your servant; if his usefulness arises in proportion to his greatness, surely every other person is equally bound to be a servant, to assist the whole body, and do whatever he can for the mutual advantage of the whole.

But 3dly, we are taught by our text, that *true greatness* is inseparably connected with *great usefulness*.

If, therefore, we would be great, honorable, esteemed and loved, we must be *active, serviceable, and beneficial* to all. An indolent, inactive, and useless person, deserves no honor, either in a civil, or religious community: he is an object of dislike and contempt, rather than of
applause

applause and dignity. But the useful, the active, the serviceable man, who delights in doing good, who loves his neighbour as he loves himself, and is ever engaged to do him good, to be useful to all: this man is beloved, caressed, and honored by all those who partake of his kindness, and are happy enough to know his character.

Would you then be *great, beloved of God, and esteemed by men?*—Be good; imitate the example of Jesus Christ, from a pure principle of charity and benevolence; be serviceable to the *church*, as a *member* of it; beneficial to the *community*, as a *part* of it, and *useful* to all *mankind*, as a *citizen* of the *world*.

When I call upon you, to be useful and serviceable to the *church*, as a member of it, I do not mean that your service should be *circumscribed and confined* to a *particular society*, a *distinct denomination*; but that as much as possible it should extend to the universal church of God, in *all places and among all denominations*: for every man and woman, whatever their name or place of abode, throughout the whole world, who worship the one God of heaven and earth, love him, and keep his laws, are each a part of his church.

And I ardently wish we may all stand at the utmost distance from a *sectarian, party spirit*; such a spirit is the bane of true charity, benevolence, and of christianity itself.—Every good man is the real christian's brother, whatever the colour of his coat,

coat, the name he bears, or the party with which he is connected.

It is high time for us to reject, and put away, a narrow, contracted, bigotted mind. If we do not, the civil world will take the lead of the christian church; and the noble spirit of freedom and liberty will, like the meridian sun, diffuse its cheering beams from pole to pole; while the christian church, divided into numberless parties, will appear like a few faint glimmering stars in a dark night, whose feeble rays are scarcely seen.

It must be evident to every judicious observer, that the world at large is struggling for liberty; emerging from the long dark night of ignorance, bondage and tyranny; and panting for that freedom, which is the birth-right of man.

In this noble struggle, men of all nations, languages, and religions can unite. In this cause they can engage with firmness and union. It is the cause, not of a few, not of a party, not of a nation; but it is the cause of the world.

And if these can be united and harmonious; if these with firmness and friendship can pursue their laudable design; if these can exert themselves, as one man, to obtain civil liberty, natural freedom: surely the christian world, men of eminence and ability in the church of Christ, men of piety and virtue, should be equally united, harmonious and friendly; with equal attachment to each other, affection and firmness, should they engage in the cause of christianity, advance the spiritual

spiritual interests of men, disseminate the truths of heaven, and bring a captive world back to the liberty of the gospel, to the mild pacific government of JESUS CHRIST, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Who are the greatest men, in a civil and political point of view, now in the world? Why those brave, generous, and able patriots, who stand forward for the emancipation of slaves, and for that universal freedom and liberty, to which human nature is entitled.

And who in this view are the *servants of all*? Why those very men who are exerting themselves to the very utmost; who are devoting their wisdom, their time, their fortunes, and their pens, to accomplish those grand and noble designs; who are labouring to make all nations blessed, to restore universal peace, to establish good order and government, to make all *mankind happy in civil life*.

These are men whom we ought to *esteem, value and love*, as instruments in the hands of the Lord for *universal good*.

And who are the *greatest*, in a *religious and spiritual* point of view? Why those generous, pious and heavenly minds, who stand forward in the church, for the real eternal good and happiness of all its members.

These are the *servants of all*, who are exerting themselves to the utmost of their power; who are devoting their time, wisdom, abilities and talents,
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to accomplish so desirable an end; who are labouring to bless the whole church of God, advance the spiritual interests of men, disseminate the truths of the word, establish peace, order and harmony, and to cement the whole body in universal charity and love.

And may not we all become in our measure thus *great*, the useful servants of all? And is it not time that *universal love* should go hand in hand with *universal freedom*; and all christians be of one mind, of one heart, and of one soul?—I do not say that universal freedom is *already* obtained; but I do say, the world is labouring for it; and I have no doubt but their labours will be successful.

And ought not the christian world to exert themselves with equal ardour and perseverance, to promote, spread and establish *religious peace, true charity*, and union?

I am persuaded the time is now commencing, in which bigotry, party-spirit, and sectarian prejudices shall die away; in which christians of all denominations shall see, that the essence of true religion is love to God and man.

The peculiar doctrines, sentiments and opinions, which have divided the church into numberless parties, will be seen in *their proper light*, as the traditions and inventions of aspiring minds, who much rather chose to be called fathers and masters, to *usurp authority* over men, and to
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receive honour and dominion, than to be the *servants* of the church, the *least* among the faints, and the humble instruments in the Lord's hands for the good of mankind.

And I am convinced, that the serious and pious of all persuasions will soon see the necessity of healing those breaches error and evil have made; of coming into a spirit of love and charity, and of being zealous, indefatigable servants of the church, for the peace and prosperity of the whole body.

The *scattered* and divided parts of the Lord's army, who have drawn the sword of envy and contention against each other, will not only sheath that sword in its scabbard, but *entirely destroy* it. They will return from all quarters to the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ their God, enlist themselves under his banner, all be united as one man as the *host* of the Lord. They will draw no sword but that of *divine Truth*, which they will unitedly wield against all falsehood and evil; till, in the strength of the Lord of Hosts, their infernal foes are subdued.

Then shall men sit down under their vines, and under their fig-trees, none daring to hurt or make them afraid. They shall all know, and love the Lord Jesus from the least to the greatest; and love each other as they love themselves. There shall
be

be ONE Church, ONE JEHOVAH, ONE God; and Truth, and Peace, and Love, for ever reign!

Then, Sirs, he that is greatest, will be the servant of all; he that is humble, will be exalted; every one will contribute to the happiness of the whole, and all be happy in the last, best kingdom of the Lord our God.

Permit me, in conclusion, to request that you will, as christians, cultivate a *noble, generous, loving spirit and disposition*. Rise above the *narrow* grovelling mind of the sectarian and bigot.

Consider; as real christians you are members of the universal church of God on earth: as christians you are heirs of the universal heavens above: and there is not a man or a woman in all the church of God below, nor a man or woman in all the heavens of God above, but what is your *brother* and your *sister*, united to you in the eternal bonds of *truth and love*!

Rise then, ye christians, rise to love divine, to charity unfeigned, to boundless charity; expand the generous heart, grasp all your race in arms of love.

If you would be great below, *be good*; be men of charity; serve all the human race, but serve them all in love, like him who is your pattern, your Lord and God: the *greatest* he is in earth, in heaven; and yet the *least*.

O may that humble love, which washed poor

Peter's feet, dwell in each breast, unite us all in
one, and make us *great* indeed!

Then humble, loving, self-abased and meek,
We shall resemble Jesus,—useful prove,
Our life be peace, our heav'n be joy *and* love.



V I N I S.

